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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION

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FOOD AND FARMING IN 1943

An end-of-the-year review of the American food and agriculture record for 1943 is the story of a tremendous achievement. That 1943 record is further valuable because of what it indicates for 1944.

The 1943 achievements on the farm front rival our great successes on the military front. Our military success may be more easily apparent, by looking at a map and comparing the positions of our lines now compared to a year ago. But the achievements on the farm front during 1943, even if less dramatic and less easily explained, are no less remarkable. The public should understand these achievements.

Similarly, just as our military gains were fought for foot by foot against obstacles which would have stopped any other army in history, our 1943 achievements on the farm front were accomplished in the face of difficulties which would have stopped anything short of the genius and resourcefulness of the American farmer.

At the end of the year these achievements deserve review, not only to appreciate these accomplishments, but so that the progress made may serve as a benchmark from which to plan for 1944.

The wartime problems which confronted agriculture in 1943 have not been removed; that cannot be done while the war lasts. Many of these problems existed before the war; many of them will prevail when peace returns.

These problems are many. They include problems of farm prices, which are always on our doorstep. They include the problems of manpower and of adequate farm machinery and equipment, in the face of demands by the military. They include the supply of fertilizers. They include the problem of the transportation of record loads of farm production when all facilities are strained to the utmost. They include the difficult problem of maintaining a balance of livestock and feed supplies. They include the problem of providing food supplies adequate to maintain our civilian population at a healthful and productive level and yet have food to ship and to stockpile to meet the outside demands.

These are only the major headings. Within these there are minor problems in countless detail. Most of these problems are part and parcel of war; they will exist as long as the war continues; they can never be removed. But they may be overcome. The record of 1943 reveals how this was done.

1943 Production

In 1943 the nation's record output of food was 32 percent above the 1935-39 average. It was 5 percent above the previous all-time record of 1942. It was 50 percent above any year's production during the other World War. The 10 percent increase above 1942 in livestock production more than offset the 10 percent decrease in food crop production which resulted from smaller yields due to drought conditions, notwithstanding a larger acreage. Record production of oil crops and direct food crops included soybean production at 380 percent, peanuts 211 percent, flaxseed 366 percent, dry peas 415 percent, beans 152 percent, and potatoes 128 percent of the 10 year pre-war 1932-41 average.

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Egg production was at record levels and milk production was higher than in any year except 1942. Livestock production was 8 percent above 1942 and one-third above the 5-year average 1937-41. The year ended with the largest livestock inventory in history, with 3 percent more cattle, 19 percent more hogs, and 4 percent fewer sheep and lambs than a year ago.

Production of hay and the four principal feed grains was second only to the record crops of 1942. In spite of consumption by the 1943 record number of livestock, the year ended with total supplies of feed grains the largest in history with the exception of 1942.

This production resulted from a growing season only slightly above average. Floods caused serious damage from Oklahoma to Michigan, and heavy rains delayed plantings. Later floods occurred in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Dry weather injured pasture and late crops over a wide area. This production record resulted from preparation, cooperation, and sustained effort.

The reserves of soil fertility accumulated and stored through the recent years of the farm program have been sufficient to meet the increased demands from the soil. During the past six years crop yields averaged 21 percent above the 10 year average 1923-32; they were 24 percent above in 1943.

Farm Prices and Income

The index number of prices received by farmers for 1943 averaged 188 compared with 157 in 1942 (1909-1914 = 100). The largest increases were in fruit, truck crops and feed grain prices. Prices paid by farmers also increased, with the parity index averaging 163 as compared with 151 in 1942. On the average, prices received by farmers were 15 percent above parity in 1943 compared with 3 percent in the preceding year.

The 1943 cash income from farm marketings is estimated at about 19.2 billion dollars, compared with 15.5 billion in 1942. Government payments increased these to 19.9 and 16.2 respectively, more than double the 1935-39 average. The realized net income of farm expenditures in 1943 was about 12.5 billion dollars compared with 9.5 billion dollars in 1942.

Compared with 1935-39 civilians consumed more meats, eggs, chickens, fluid milk and cream, lard, vegetable oils, fresh citrus fruits, canned juices, potatoes, and dry edible beans. They consumed less fish, cheese, butter, fresh and canned fruits, and fresh vegetables. The 1943 civilian food supply was somewhat larger in all essential nutrients than in 1935-39.

Food Distribution

This high consumption rate was made possible in part by the high production already mentioned and in part by the food distribution programs which were designed to assure equitable distribution of scarce foods and to divert all foods into the proper channels. Programs developed during the year included food allocation, food orders, coordinated procurement of food, food conservation, industrial feeding, and others.

Allocation is the cornerstone of the entire distribution program. It is based on decisions as to prospective supply and who is to get it.

Because of their record purchasing power, civilians, unchecked, would have bought all the food we produced last year. Similarly, to have met the full wants of our armed forces and allies would have endangered our civilians' nutritional status, endangering our war production and home front morale. Allocation enabled the middle course. In 1943 it provided 75 percent of our food production for civilians, the rest going for direct war purposes -- 13 percent to our military services, 12 percent to our allies and other friendly nations.

Food distribution orders were the means of implementing this allocation and 919 orders were issued during the year, covering nearly every important phase of food distribution. Some enforced economies in processing and distribution, thus helping keep down costs, and conserving manpower, materials and transportation. Some of the orders held back supplies for the military. Some allocated scarce foods for better distribution. Each order was for a specific need and was withdrawn when its purpose had been served.

The War Food Administration worked closely with the armed services in coordinating all government buying of food. Through the establishment of an Inter-Agency Food Procurement Committee, supplies were provided at times, in places, and in quantities adjusted to avoid disruption of normal channels of food distribution. An important action phase was the buying of food for our allies, territories, Red Cross, and other groups. This procurement program went into many fields. It included drawing up various food specifications, helping with manpower problems, developing new processes such as dehydration and compression, devising new types of packaging, and solving problems of transportation and warehousing. More than 80 food industry advisory committees helped with these activities.

The food procurement program has recognized the need for building up reserves for direct war requirements. Butter, for example, was accumulated by the Government during the months of heavy production. During months of light production, the Government stopped its butter buying, thereby bringing about a more nearly even flow of butter to civilians the year round. As soon as it was found that any stocks of Government-owned food were not needed for direct war use, the policy was adopted of immediately releasing such stocks to civilians through the regular trade channels. By the end of the year WFA stocks were large in the case of only a few commodities, such as canned fruits and vegetables and dried beans and peas. For most commodities the Government maintained less than a month's supply in relation to the current rate of shipments. By far the largest portion of the total quantity of food in commercial storage at the end of the year was privately held for civilian use -- an important back-log for consumers in view of the fact that the early months of the calendar year are the months of low production especially of annual crops.

Spoilage of food has been kept to a minimum. Some spoilage, of course, is inevitable, especially of perishables. Careful watch of all stocks was maintained and the stock position reviewed every 10 days. Spoilage amounted to a loss of less than one tenth of one percent of the amount purchased.

Local shortages of some foods developed during the year, particularly in concentrated areas. In several congested areas WFA was instrumental in helping establish and expand in-plant feeding facilities and in improving the meals served to industrial workers. In other areas where temporary local overabundances developed, commodities were purchased to support producer prices, new market or processing outlets were found, warehousing facilities were obtained, or programs

were developed for urging the sale of these foods at the time when heaviest supplies arrived on the market.

Price Supports

Adequate farm price supports were developed for 39 farm products and were found essential in getting the large food production in 1943. Announced early, they assure farmers at planting time of specified returns. They are the farmers' equivalent of the contract prices to producers of other war materials such as guns, ships, tanks, clothing, etc. In addition, the relative levels of these support prices furnish a device for encouraging the production of various crops in line with the production goals. These support price programs are financed by funds made available by Congress to the War Food Administration.

Whenever the support prices are out of line with the OPA ceiling prices at wholesale or retail, it is of course necessary for the War Food Administration to take a loss in order to do two necessary things at the same time — (1) enable farmers to turn out the necessary production, (2) hold the prices of foods to consumers down to the point contemplated in the Administration's price stabilization program. In order to do these two necessary things, some commodities are bought at the support price and re-sold at a lower price. For other commodities the method is to make a direct payment to producers so as to bring up their returns without affecting prices to consumers. The total cost of all such operations during the year 1943 was about \$350,000,000. They prevented a rise in prices which would have made necessary increases in wages, and finally in costs of war materials and civilian goods that would have amounted to several billions of dollars. Thus, the cost of these operations saved billions of dollars for future generations against whom the costs of the war will be assessed.

Farm Labor

One of the greatest problems that faced farmers at the beginning of the year was the shortage of experienced labor. About 800,000 young farm men had joined the armed forces during the preceding three years. Another 3-1/2 million actual and potential farm workers had gone to war plants and other industries. The number of people working on farms at the beginning of 1943 was the lowest on record, and this included older men, women and children replacements.

Yet, notwithstanding these difficulties, more food and fiber was produced than ever before.

The farm people were chiefly responsible for this accomplishment.

Reports show that during the summer farmers increased their working hours even above the long hours they worked in 1942. Still greater gains were made by sharing and saving labor.

By the end of 1943 about 1,650,000 farmers and farm laborers between the ages of 18 and 37 inclusive had been deferred by Selective Service boards under the Tydings Amendment. In making these deferments these boards had the advice of Department of Agriculture field representatives. It is estimated that 400,000 year round workers who otherwise would have entered the armed services were kept on the farm through deferment. Inductions of farm men during 1943 were about 250,000 compared to 510,000 who entered the armed forces in 1942. Early in the

year the War Department approved the release of some enlisted men over 38 to return to farming.

During the year more than 50,000 Mexicans, nearly 9,000 Jamaicans, and 4,700 Bahamians were imported for agricultural work under agreement with the governments of those countries. In April 1943 Congress appropriated \$26,100,000 for expenditure by WFA to help farmers obtain workers. WFA allocated a part of these funds to the state extension services, and the county agents were given responsibility for mobilizing local labor, including recruits from towns and cities, and for placing all farm labor. Recruits were enlisted in the U. S. Crop Corps which includes the Women's Land Army and also the Victory Farm Volunteers, which is made up of boys and girls 14 to 18 years of age. Some 250,000 Women's Land Army enrollees and 400,000 Victory Farm Volunteers were placed through extension farm labor offices during the year.

From April 29, when Public Law 45 became effective, about 4,000,000 placements of workers were made under the government's farm labor program. These involved 1,500,000 different workers. These placements were made through the 6,150 local farm placement offices. Most of these are operated by the state extension services and the rest by the U. S. Employment Service under contract with the extension services. In addition to these already mentioned, the 1943 farm labor force included 45,400 prisoners of war, 12,600 Japanese evacuees, 4,400 inmates of corrective and penal institutions, 2,500 conscientious objectors, 54,500 members of the military services who volunteered to work on farms on temporary passes from their camps, and 7,425 soldiers detailed in units to extreme emergency areas in North and South Dakota, Maine, New York, and California.

The WFA Office of Labor transported, in addition to foreign workers, 20,000 U. S. farm workers from their home states to other states during the year to meet critical labor needs in specialty crop areas. Extension Service transported about 27,000 workers within their home states. The Office of Labor operated 151 farm labor camps and the extension services financed or assisted in financing 280 camps.

We achieved our record 1943 production with nearly 4,000,000 fewer people on farms than in World War I. This was due in large part to the greater efficiency of our agriculture. Output of food per farm worker in 1943 averaged 61 percent higher than in 1918.

Farm Machinery, Equipment and Supplies

At the beginning of 1943 it was still necessary for the nation to direct a maximum effort to produce the instruments of war, and hence agriculture had to share with the railroads and other important claimants the available supplies of steel and other critical materials. For example, the railroads carried freight and passengers at twice the rate during the other war -- and did this with fewer locomotives and fewer cars than then. Yet, in spite of this need they were allotted 85 percent of their requirements for replacements of rails, 80 percent for locomotives, and 51 percent for freight cars.

WPB Order L-257 issued on July 1, 1943, authorized manufacture of farm machinery and equipment during the succeeding 12 months at 80 percent of the 1940 level, and in addition permitted manufacture of the machinery not completed under the previous order. This order was amended by further addition of harvesting machinery to bring production to 85 percent. Add to this the production carried

over from the previous year, and total production during the 12 months ending July 1944 should be nearly as great as in 1940. During the year authorized production of tractors increased from 17 percent of 1940 to 32 percent, then to 58 percent, and finally to the present level of 70 percent. Since the middle of the year, repair parts have been permitted in unlimited quantities. To make the most of the available production, it has been carefully apportioned according to relative needs created by factors of crop goals and labor shortages; critical items have been rationed by farm rationing committees according to need. Originally 91 types of farm machinery were rationed; this has been reduced to the 31 types considered most essential to the attainment of food goals.

Production of barbed wire and woven wire fence, severely limited in 1942 and the first few months of 1943, has now been increased to pre-war levels.

Fertilizers (except nitrogen needed for explosives) were supplied above pre-war levels, while adequate insecticides and fungicides were available to protect commercial crops and victory gardens. They were distributed equitably to meet the crop needs in various areas. Necessary supplies of animal medicinals, poultry and dairy disinfectants, and other chemicals of importance in farming made possible the large 1943 livestock production.

The food processing industries, at the beginning of 1943, had been cut off from their normal supplies of new machinery but were faced with a greatly increased demand for food, and most of what is produced on farms must be processed before it can be used as food. Machinery was badly needed but materials were short. Consultations were held with food industries and machine manufacturers; schedules of production of minimum needs for new equipment were drawn up, and WPB released the necessary materials. As a result the food processing industries handled 49 percent more meat than in the average pre-war year, 63 percent more chickens, 50 percent more egg products, 14 percent more dairy products, 29 percent more fats and oils, and 63 percent more canned vegetables. Additional plants were built during the year capable of dehydrating 300,000 tons, dry weight, of vegetables, milk, meat, and eggs.

Because housewives were urged to can in their own kitchens to release commercial canned stocks, 315,000 pressure canners were made available in 1943 as against the 66,000 manufactured in 1942. Next year it is hoped that 400,000 can be produced.

Food Transportation

The record food production of 1943 provided a serious transportation problem. With transportation facilities already overburdened, 2,650,000 cars of grain and grain products were moved in 1943, an increase of more than 20 percent over 1942 and 30 percent over 1941. The 840,000 car loads of livestock moved were 12.5 percent greater than 1942 and nearly 30 percent above 1941.

Grain imports from Canada were many times greater than in 1942. Lake requirements for movement of grain to east lake ports were originally estimated at 160 to 200 million bushels. The actual movement was approximately 190,000,000 bushels compared to 114,000,000 bushels in 1942. This was accomplished in spite of a late opening of navigation and heavy shipments of iron ore and other critical materials.

Steps have been taken toward securing the vessel tonnage to move 285,000,000 bushels in 1944, including Lake Michigan ports.

The record crop of 70,000,000 bushels of potatoes in Maine overtaxed local storage facilities, and loss was avoided only through the successful movement of more than 21,000 cars before the end of November. The shipments averaged around 400 cars per day during October and November, an accomplishment without precedent.

In March 1943 a shortage of refrigerator cars developed. After analysis, recommendations were made to the Inter-State Commerce Commission resulting in an order restricting the use of refrigerator cars to strictly essential uses.

Conserving transportation may be accomplished through compulsory regulation or by voluntary measures. The WFA has taken the lead in endeavoring to get voluntary programs established to meet the need as laid down by the Office of Defense Transportation. Nineteen major industries are now preparing proposals of voluntary plans, and other industries will be approached through their advisory groups.

To lighten the load of the railroads, WFA has cooperated closely in efforts to make use of water transportation whenever possible. Much of the movement of sugar, which since the start of the war moved largely by rail from Florida to the Eastern Seaboard, has now been diverted to movement by water. About 1-1/2 million bushels of grain per month have moved from Minneapolis to the Southeast by barge, and feed wheat has been moved from Vancouver to San Francisco and Los Angeles by water.

1944

The 1944 production goals call for 16,000,000 additional acres, or about 4 percent above the 1943 acreage, a total planted acreage of 380,000,000 acres; the largest ever planted in the nation's history.

While it will be necessary to bring the livestock and feed production more nearly into balance, our meat supply is made more hopeful by the fact that we had more livestock and poultry numbers on January 1 than ever before.

Both food demands and supplies are more subject to unpredictable forces in wartime than in peace, because there are more factors operating, many of which are uncontrollable. Hence, allocations of various foods to the various claimants are necessarily subject to periodic revision, and allocations are firm for only three months. Civilian food supplies for the entire year 1944, therefore, cannot be definitely known at this time, depending as they do on developments of production and shipping, as well as on developments of changing demands as the war progresses. However, predictions and allocations can be made currently.

Farmers are going to make every effort to reach their goals, but in some cases may fall short because of influences that they can't control. For example, the goal for milk set by farmers themselves calls for production of some 2 percent more milk than was turned out in 1943. However, if present milk production trends continue, probably there will be 2 percent less milk produced in 1944 than in 1943. If this occurs, and the goals as to use of the milk — the proportion of it going into different manufactured products — are about reached, it appears that American

cheese production will be up 3 percent, evaporated milk up 5 percent, and butter down about 5 percent. There will be about the same amount of fluid milk for civilians as in 1943.

The civilian supply of milk and dairy products of course will depend on how much is turned out and how much is required for use by our fighting men and our allies. The tentative allocations for the year will provide for civilians about 19 percent less American cheese, 15 percent less cheeses other than American, and about 25 percent less evaporated milk in 1944.

Egg supplies will be 2 or 3 percent greater than in 1943 and civilian supplies will exceed the record 1943 consumption by 2 percent. Total supplies of chickens in 1944 will be about the same as in 1943 and civilian supplies will nearly equal the all-time record supplies of 1943. Turkey production will probably equal that of 1943, the second largest on record. Civilian supplies of turkeys will probably be about 13 percent smaller than in 1943 but above the pre-war average.

There will be an increase of 7 percent over 1943 in total supplies of fats and oils, including butter, available for civilians, military and lend-lease. Production will exceed that of 1943 by about 3 percent. Civilian supplies for food fats may be slightly less per capita in 1944 than in 1943, because of increased military, lend-lease, and other requirements. For example, there will be about one-half pound less butter per capita for civilians in 1944, due to military requirements.

Supplies of corn, oats, and barley may be as much as 10 percent less in 1944 than 1943, assuming normal yields and that acreage goals are reached. Supplies of wheat and rye for food will be plentiful. Civilian consumption of wheat will be slightly higher than in 1943, and consumption of rye will be about the same.

Total production of citrus fruits in 1943-44 will be about 3 percent greater than in 1942-43. Oranges will reach an all-time high, exceeding last year's production by about 9 percent. With average growing conditions, production of fruits other than citrus in 1944 will be substantially greater than in 1943.

Civilian supplies of canned vegetables in 1943-44 are likely to be three-fourths to four-fifths of the quantities consumed in 1942-43, but slightly larger than the 1935-39 average. Production for processing was 14 percent smaller in 1943 than in 1942.